

Dear Legislators,

Source: Representative Rex Shipp, June 16, 2021

Almost every week, sometimes twice or three times a week someone calls, texts or emails me requesting I put them in touch with detransitioners.

Up until now, I have done my best to comply, reaching out to those I am in touch with, and asking them yet again to share their story. But something in me snapped.

I feel complicit in the ongoing damage our society has inflicted on the them. Introducing another indignity as I ask those who are struggling to heal to tear the bandages off of tender wounds in an attempt to convince society of the horrors they endured at the hands of those entrusted with their care

It is unbelievable that we live in a world where it is conceivable that detransitioners exist. A world where those suffering from gender dysphoria are told to disassociate from their healthy body, damage it in untold ways, and kill everything about themselves that reminds them of who they really are and then told to recreate a new persona.

Detransitioners were betrayed by health care providers who told them their problems would be cured by these fraudulent interventions. They have been damaged in unimaginable ways by the very people who were supposed to take care of them.

I am enraged that we have to parade detransitioners during legislative hearings in order to persuade legislators like you that we need to criminalize the chopping off healthy young teens breasts or testicles. I am incensed that we have to provide evidence of the damage done by drugs that block the normal development of a child's body when we have ample evidence of the harms these drugs do to grown-ups. I am infuriated we have to prove that an adolescent's body is irreversibly harmed by high doses of cross-sex hormones.

When detransitioners talk publicly about their experiences they are often mocked and bullied. They are belittled and shamed. They are told their stories are not real. They are told they are hurting others by their very existence. They are told they are responsible for suicides. And they are largely dismissed as aberrations or entirely ignored when they tell their stories publicly.

How dare we suggest that the only way to stop these dangerous experimental interventions is to exhibit those who have been so badly damaged by health care providers and betrayed by a system that should have protected them?

It is like asking a child who has been brutally beaten to testify her broken bones and bruises in order to convince our legislator that children should be protected against child abuse. Or asking a woman who was kidnapped and raped to describe the details of how she was violently violated to lawmakers outlaw sexual assault.

Only in this case, the child would be shamed for having asked to be beaten by activists who discount detransitioners lived experiences and the rape victim would be chastised and ridiculed for testifying about her attack because activists don't want to admit that sexual assault is harmful.

I have testified a number of times about my childhood gender dysphoria which was brought on by a brutal sexual assault, my social transition, and my efforts to convince everyone I was a boy. It is incredibly difficult to pour out the intimate details of my childhood trauma and ensuing mental illness. Even after all these years, I tremble as I recount my experience. My voice quivers, my hands sweat. And yet my story is of a little girl who got the help she so desperately needed, of therapists, teachers and other supportive adults who encouraged me to accept myself rather than reinforce the hatred I had for my body. My wounds are for the most part healed and even still, it is difficult to discuss the degree of shame I felt for my female body. It is embarrassing to recount the self-harming behaviors I engaged in. It is terrifying to be threatened, booed, hissed at and called names by activists who want to silence me. I can't image what it would be like for someone who has just recently detransitioned. We already let down those who have been damaged by puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and mutilating surgeries. They are the wounded. They deserve to heal.

It is time to stop retraumatizing detransitioners by endlessly pestering them to recount their painful experiences. It is time to protect them from further betrayal by a society that failed to protect them when they are most vulnerable. It is time that you and other legislators protect vulnerable children from been told by health care providers that their body is so wrong, their very essence is so wrong, that the only way to navigate life is to kill their identity and cultivate a new one by damaging their healthy body with puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, and surgery.